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New York

President: Mr. Ashe ..... (Antigua and Barbuda)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 120

Follow-up to the commemoration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/68/135 and A/68/291)

Draft resolution (A/68/L.7)

The President: Many will recall that paragraph 101 of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action of 2001 invited the international community and its member States to honour the victims of slavery and the slave trade in this follow-up exercise. All of us will, no doubt, recall that in December 2011, the Assembly endorsed the initiative of Member States to erect, at United Nations Headquarters, a permanent memorial in honour of the tragedy of slavery and the slave trade.

Approximately one month ago, I had the distinct honour to speak at the unveiling of the winning design for the permanent memorial honouring those victims. Three hundred and ten artists from 83 countries drew upon their creative faculties to reinforce, through the medium of the visual arts, sentiments to which Member States had already given eloquent voice in the Durban Declaration and subsequently. The design that the judges considered to be most expressive of the desired message was appropriately entitled *Ark of Return* and its creative artist, Mr. Rodney Leon, is a native of Haiti, a country with an illustrious history and its own struggle to end slavery — a struggle that has taken a heavy toll on its people. Mr. Leon described his winning submission as depicting

> "a sacred space that is designed to psychologically and spiritually transport visitors to a place where acknowledgement, education, reflection and healing can take place."

Just as other monuments erected on the grounds of the United Nations serve to remind the international community to honour the values of peace and non-violence, it is my sincere hope and wish that the soon-to be-erected *Ark of Return* will serve a corresponding purpose as a tribute to the collective aspirations of this Organization, namely: peace, human rights, social justice and the dignity of human beings.

The year 2013 marks the 206th anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade. The General Assembly's engagement with the question of slavery and the slave trade continues with draft resolution A/68/L.7, before us today, as we commit once again to raising public awareness about the legacy of that dark period in our past. Since the United Nations began considering this item some years ago, there have been numerous initiatives at the national and international levels, dedicated to the noble goals of remembering and honouring all the victims of that monstrously inhumane practice. Through their various efforts, Member States, United Nations agencies and civil-society partners have celebrated the indomitable spirit of the victims of a tragedy that continues to be inflicted upon numerous persons today, albeit in more subtle forms, including

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social and economic inequality, hatred, bigotry, racism and prejudice.

The report of the Secretary-General (A/68/291) highlights the educational, outreach and awareness-raising activities undertaken following resolution 67/108. Those campaigns provide an opportunity not only to reflect upon the history and legacy of slavery but also to address questions such as the dearth of resources and materials in educational institutions worldwide on why slavery happened, the full extent of its consequences and what lessons we have learned from it. In addition to helping ensure that the past is remembered and never repeated, those activities also offer an opportunity to highlight the often-overlooked contributions that enslaved Africans made to their economies and communities.

Among the principles on which the Charter of the United Nations was shaped are those of equality and non-discrimination. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights; that no one shall be held in slavery and servitude and that slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms. By adopting the draft resolution today, we dedicate ourselves, once again, to the task of undertaking concrete and concerted actions to uphold those rights and freedoms. Once again, we also commit ourselves to initiating and supporting efforts that make it abundantly clear to the cradle of humanity what such violations of human rights and dignity represent. My hope is that our joint recollection of the horrors of slavery and the slave trade will move us to further resolute and concrete action. Let us make a fresh resolve today that slavery, in whatever form or manifestation, will forever be a thing of the past.

I now give the floor to the representative of Jamaica, who will introduce draft resolution A/68/L.7.

Mr. Rattray (Jamaica): The institutionalized system of slavery and its enabler, the transatlantic slave trade, represent an appalling yet consequential period in the course of our human history. They reflect a tragic age when successful efforts to divide the human family were played out on a grand scale, encompassing the vast geographic and economic triangle linking Europe, Africa and the Americas. It was a time when our common humanity was not yet acknowledged, and a man and his family, through barbaric exploitation, could claim ownership of another man, woman or child, and could see to their own needs and enlargement at the expense of other human beings. It was a time when nations became great and wealthy. Others emerged while some were subjugated and exploited. Some scholars posit the view that slavery is one of the most influential phenomena in history, shaping every aspect of the world as we now know it.

So it is an honour for me to introduce today's draft resolution A/68/L.7 in the Assembly, where once again the global community has the opportunity to condemn that contemptible and barbaric historical practice, but also to renew a pledge to ensure that nothing of the kind is ever again visited on humanity. Draft resolution A/68/L.7, entitled "Permanent memorial to and remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade", the text of which is before us today, continues to take account of the importance of ensuring that current and future generations are made aware of the past and exhorted to join in a determination to prevent anything so dastardly from ever happening again.

A key activity in that quest is the erection here at United Nations Headquarters of a permanent memorial to honour the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. Let me take this opportunity, as Chair of the committee established to steer the project to reality, to advise the Assembly of the successful completion of the international artistic competition to select a design for the memorial, held over the past two years.

At this juncture, I would like to express our gratitude to UNESCO and the United Nations Office for Partnerships for their excellent collaboration in conducting the competition. A total of 310 entries were received, from persons representing 83 nationalities. Sixteen contestants were shortlisted and evaluated through an anonymous procedure by an international panel of judges, all of whom are experts in their fields and reflect a cross-section of nationalities. Seven finalists were brought to New York and interviewed, and their models were assessed by the judges, who came to a unanimous decision on the winning design, *Ark of Return*, by Rodney Leon, which was unveiled on 23 September in a special ceremony here at the United Nations. I would like to once again congratulate Mr. Leon and the other finalists, whose works, we are told by the judges, were all of high quality and showed a good understanding of the depth and importance of the subject matter.

The *Ark of Return*, according to the judges, is an entirely feasible and appropriate proposal, which has an impressive visual impact and invites exploration by the viewers. We therefore owe a debt of gratitude to the panel of distinguished judges — Mr. David Boxer, from my own country, Jamaica; Ms. Nadia Bakhurji, from Saudi Arabia; Ms. Dominique Fontaine, from Canada and Haiti; Mr. Michael Gomez, from New York University, here in the United States; and Mr. Ashfar Isahq, from Pakistan — who undertook this enormous task on a completely voluntary basis and have collectively pledged their ongoing commitment to the memorial.

It would be remiss of me to not also convey deep appreciation to those Member States that have so generously contributed to the Trust Fund for the Permanent Memorial. We appreciate all donations received, which in many ways reflect the broader commitment to the goals of the permanent memorial project, as represented not only in the draft resolution before us but in those we have annually adopted under this agenda item since 2006. We also express thanks to a range of private individuals, corporations and foundations that have made contributions as well. That broadens the scope of ownership of and fidelity to this noble initiative.

The ongoing work to bring this worthy project to completion would not have been possible without the vision and unstinting support of a team of pioneers who laid the firm foundation on which we now build. Here I must mention my predecessor, Ambassador Raymond Wolfe, who worked tirelessly to bring the vision to reality. Allow me also to make special mention of Mr. Amir Dossal, former head of the United Nations Office for Partnerships, who was a committed partner and who, although officially retired from the United Nations, remains faithful to the initiative.

We will now embark on the final phase of the project, which is to commission the construction and erection of the memorial on a United Nations podium. The aim of the draft resolution is not only to endorse the erection of the monument. Although that in itself is an admirable accomplishment in honour of the victims of slavery, we consider that the more important aspect of the draft resolution is the fact that it that calls for broad education and outreach to disseminate information to the global public on the history and impact of slavery. The aim is to influence modern social norms in a way that rejects racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and prejudice and that promotes healing, tolerance and respect for diversity.

It is for that reason that we have continued to emphasize the work of the United Nations through the Department of Public Information in maintaining a focus on that important aspect of relations in global society. I commend the excellent work that has been done by the Department of Public Information over the years and implore all Member States to actively engage in the outreach programme envisaged in the draft resolution. The Secretary-General's report (A/68/291) illustrates the large selection of noteworthy activities that the Organization has undertaken across the globe to achieve that mandate. We encourage further activities to that end.

In commending this draft for adoption, let us be reminded that we share one humanity and that there is no place for prejudice and discrimination in the world today. As we mark those milestones, the best way to honour the memory of those victims is to fulfil their fundamental hope for equality, dignity, humanity and justice for every human being. I am pleased, therefore, on behalf of the Caribbean Community, the African Group and all our sponsors, to present this draft for consideration and adoption.

Mr. Kumar (India): I deem it a singular privilege to be able to speak on behalf of my country on this important agenda item before the General Assembly. I would like to welcome the Secretary-General's report on the programme of educational outreach on the transatlantic slave trade and slavery (A/68/291), and his status report on the United Nations Trust Fund for Partnerships—Permanent Memorial, that is, for the permanent memorial to and remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade (A/68/135).

The transatlantic slave trade is one of the most abhorrent chapters in the history of humankind. It ravaged African and Caribbean nations to satisfy the rapacious economic greed and exploitation of colonizers. The lingering consequences of its brutality and human suffering are visible even today. We must, therefore, take initiatives to ensure that future generations do not forget the grief and tragedy borne by the countless nameless victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. It is equally imperative that the international community take upon itself a commitment to ensuring that such crimes against humanity will never recur. Education has a critical role in creating awareness

among current and future generations of the history, causes and impact of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. A better understanding of history provides a valuable perspective for confronting today's challenges.

India welcomes the various outreach activities and programmes organized in March by the Department of Public Information to commemorate the International Day of Remembrance at the United Nations, as well as in other countries, through its network of information centres and partner organizations. We stress the need for regular and adequate allocation of financing to the Department for organizing such events. We also welcome the initiatives undertaken by States in reaffirming their commitment to implement paragraphs 101 and 102 of the Durban Declaration, aimed at countering the legacy of slavery and honouring the memory of the victims of slavery and the slave trade.

The construction of a permanent memorial will be a fitting tribute by the United Nations to the millions of victims of the transatlantic slave trade. We are pleased to note that the international competition to finalize the memorial design has been concluded, and that the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly unveiled the winning design in September. With the sum of $260,000, India is the lead contributor to the United Nations Trust Fund for Partnerships — Permanent Memorial for erecting a permanent memorial. So far, however, the Trust Fund has received only close to $1.4 million, against an anticipated cost of $4.5 million for the memorial's construction. We therefore strongly urge all countries, and particularly those that benefited from the transatlantic trade, to come forward and contribute generously to show their earnest admission that wrongs were committed and that there is a sense of repentance.

As we recall the struggle, the degradation and the deaths of the victims of the transatlantic slave trade, we hope that a permanent memorial can be constructed at an early date. It will indeed be a small but fitting commemoration of the struggle of the victims, who suffered silently, with no hope of freedom, before they disappeared into the night. We have a chance to pay our humble tribute to those who suffered that disgrace by contributing generously to the Trust Fund. That is the least we can all do.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the African Group. I would like to pay tribute to Jamaica and all involved for the tireless efforts they have been making to the realization of the Permanent Memorial. I admit we all have to do more.

The transatlantic slave trade is the gravest crime committed against humanity with few rivals in its infamy and cruelty. The inhumane and barbaric manner in which it was committed, its magnitude and the time span over which it was allowed to continue have no par in history and will remain a scar on the conscience of humanity. Africans and peoples of African descent have suffered for centuries owing to that horrendous crime. Even after the official abolition of the slave trade, its institutionalized legacy continued to be a source of exploitation, humiliation, discrimination, bias, hatred, prejudice and racism against peoples of African origin both in the continent and elsewhere.

As we remember that unparalleled crime, we cherish the struggles of those Africans and their descendants, who aspired and dreamed to live in freedom and equality. We recognize, with great emotion, their contribution to the genesis of the ideal of Pan-Africanism, an ideal that inspired a people's movement in the diaspora, which was later joined by Africans from the continent. Indeed, that movement, among other things, created the momentum for Africa's quest for freedom from the yoke of colonialism and, later, for the establishment of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). As we are celebrating the golden jubilee of the OAU/African Union this year, we indeed remember those who perished and the immense contribution of those who followed them.

It is therefore imperative that we remember those who perished and were uprooted. That has meaning for today and for the future and posterity. We are of the view that a clear and frank analysis of the situation and the heroic struggle of those who rose up against slavery can provide a valuable perspective and be a source of pride and motivation for present and future generations in overcoming today's challenges.

In that connection, we have noted with satisfaction the successful conclusion of the international design competition for the Permanent Memorial and the selection of the design for *Ark of Return* as the model for the permanent memorial. However, the fact that as of June 2013 the United Nations Trust Fund for Partnerships—Permanent Memorial has received only $1.37 million as against the anticipated expenditure of three times that existing balance for the construction of the Memorial is indicative of how much more we still have to do. In that regard, we encourage Member States

and other interested parties to make further voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund. We all have obligations, without exception.

In our view, the Memorial will not only serve as a hallmark for us to pay our respect but will also be a reminder for the international community of the grief and tragedy borne by the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade.

Africa welcomes the various remembrance activities and programmes undertaken by the Department of Public Information, including the commemorative activities at the United Nations in March 2013. We support the continued efforts of the Department of Public Information to utilize its network of global information centres to build awareness on the issue. We also welcome the initiatives undertaken by States in reaffirming their commitment to implement paragraphs 101 and 102 of the Durban Declaration of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, aimed at countering the legacy of slavery and honouring the memory of the victims of slavery and the slave trade.

As sponsors of draft resolution A/68/L.7, the States members of the Africa Group fully support the speedy implementation of the initiative of Member States to erect, in a place of prominence at United Nations Headquarters that is easily accessible to representatives, United Nations staff and visitors, a permanent memorial in acknowledgement of the tragedy and in consideration of the legacy of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. The adoption of a draft resolution is the least we can do.

Mr. Strickland (United States of America): As a multicultural society, the United States remains committed to fighting racism, safeguarding the dignity of people regardless of race or background and countering the hateful legacy of slavery. We believe strongly in spreading awareness of the struggle of the men, women and children who fell victim to slavery and to educating future generations on that tragic past as a means of combating racism and prejudice. The United States continues to press forward on eliminating discrimination within our own country, as well as in joining the global community in creating a world of freedom and equality for all.

In addition, the United States has supported UNESCO's Breaking the Silence transatlantic slave trade education project. As part of that effort, we have engaged Governments and civil society organizations alike to raise awareness of the history of the slave trade as well as to highlight the invaluable contributions made by persons of African descent in every field of human endeavour. The United States is proud to congratulate Mr. Rodney Leon on his being chosen to design the Permanent Memorial. Mr. Leon, a Haitian-American, is a celebrated artist whose work has offered our nation space and inspiration to reflect on our painful history as well as on the progress we have made. His design, *Ark of Return*, will inspire us to remember and honour the victims of the transatlantic slave trade, to reflect on the past and the lessons we have learned, and to contemplate the steps we each must take to combat the lingering consequences of slavery and to eradicate discrimination.

The United States is honoured to co-sponsor today's draft resolution (A/68/L.7) on the Permanent Memorial to and remembrance of the victims of slavery and the translatlantic slave trade. We must never forget the terrible human tragedy of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade and the moral courage of those who worked to end it.

Mr. Magid (Israel): I would like to thank Ambassador Rattray and the Permanent Mission of Jamaica for their leadership and their efforts to bring this important subject to the forefront of the United Nations agenda.

The American author Robert Heinlein once said, "A generation that ignores history has no past ... and no future". Today we recommit ourselves to memory so as to ensure that the tragedies of the past have clear lessons for the future. The transatlantic slave trade casts a dark shadow over history. The enslavement of Africans was cruel and dehumanizing. Thirty million people were forced from their homes, uprooted from villages and driven into bondage. Many have recalled the horrific conditions during their voyages and their conditions during their enslavement. The dark centuries of the slave trade represent one of the longest and most sustained assaults on the life, integrity and dignity of human beings in history, yet even after the abolition of slavery, living conditions for African communities remained horrific during the nineteenth century.

The Jewish people share the story of people who were persecuted. The Jewish Bible describes how the Jewish people emerged from bitter enslavement in ancient Egypt to become a nation in the land of Israel. They remained there until conquering forces expelled

and scattered them across the globe. Powerless and persecuted, they suffered in every country and every century. Every day for 2,000 years, Jews prayed, asking God to return them to the land of Israel. At long last, in 1948, we realized independence and the opportunity to rebuild our own land. We built our State on the principles of freedom, tolerance and understanding.

The Jewish people identify with the suffering of the peoples of Africa and the Caribbean and all those who share a burdened history. Because we were born in slavery, we understand the yearning for freedom. Because we suffered the indignity of persecution, we understand the value of human dignity. And because for 2,000 years Jews' lives were held to be cheap, we understand the sanctity of life.

Israel is proud of its financial contribution to the Permanent Memorial in honour of victims of slavery and the international slave trade. We are honoured to be among the sponsors of the draft resolution on the topic, as we have been every year. The Memorial must serve as a call to action — a call to every nation, every leader and every citizen — to do everything they can to ensure that no human being is ever enslaved.

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Yet as we gather here today, many around the world are not free. Every year, hundreds of thousands of people, mostly women and children, are trafficked across borders worldwide. The trafficking of human beings is a grave injustice that has no place in a civilized world. There is also no place in the civilized world for those who enslave others with hate, racism and prejudice. They are the fuel that power persecution, war and violence. We must believe in memorials. Through education, remembrance and vigilance we can ensure that the tragedies of the past serve as clear lessons for the future.

Israel joins with the international community today in advancing that work. Together, we must extend a promise to our children that freedom is universal, dignity is inherent, and that life is sacred.

Mr. Gaspard (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): First of all, allow me to thank the Secretary-General for his reports (A/68/135 and A/68/291) and also to welcome the excellent work carried out by the commemoration committee for the 200th anniversary under the wise and energetic leadership of our friend and brother country, Jamaica. In that regard, my delegation would like to support the statement made by the Ambassador of Jamaica.

This morning's discussion is, for my delegation, a very special one. Indeed, it is occurring only a few days after 17 October, the anniversary of the death of the founder of the Haitian nation, Jean-Jacques Dessalines. It also takes place just a few days after the commemorative activities held by the authorities of the city of Savannah at the memorial erected to the memory of the Haitian heroes who took part in the great battle of Savannah, at the end of the eighteenth century.

The commemorative activities conducted by our Organization, the information provided by its Member States in their national educational programmes, under paragraph 8 of resolution 67/108, and the many programmes developed by UNESCO all show that we are on the right path regarding the goals we have set ourselves. My delegation can only encourage staying the course.

In the same vein, we welcome the noble initiative taken up by Member States to build a Permanent Memorial at United Nations Headquarters. The execution of such a project will be an important moment in the life of our Organization. Beyond its symbolic significance, the Memorial should serve as a real catalyst for unity and for a major reconciliation among peoples. The Memorial must also contribute to combating forgetfulness and to building this great work of memory, so very necessary in order to serve as a reminder that throughout history thousands of human beings have been deprived of their freedom and treated as things, as merchandise, as something that is valuable and to be exploited at will.

My delegation would therefore like to welcome the establishment of a trust fund for the Permanent Memorial, called the United Nations Trust Fund for Partnerships—Permanent Memorial, and takes this opportunity to express its deep gratitude to all States that have made contributions to the Fund. For my delegation, the Permanent Memorial will represent an acknowledgement of the bitter struggles that our ancestors waged to eradicate forever that cruel, inhuman and degrading order that the colonial and slavery system represented, to bring about a new world. Our presence here to discuss it is a clear manifestation of that.

My country was the pioneer of that great struggle. Haiti's contribution to the birth of that free world

is incontestably and universally recognized, even if sometimes certain events arise to push us to forget or minimize it. It is important for us to briefly recall some historical facts that are universally recognized and which mark the contribution of Haiti in the liberation of humanity from slavery.

First, as we said at the beginning, Haitian fighters were in Savannah in 1779, fighting alongside American combatants in their struggle for liberation. Among those heroes, we can cite Henry Christophe, Jean-Baptiste Chavannes, Jean-Louis Villatte and André Rigaud, to name just a few. It is to pay tribute to those freedom fighters that the city of Savannah erected a memorial to their memory in October 2007.

Secondly, in 1804, during an unprecedented revolutionary war, we overthrew a colonial and slave order that was established on the island of Santo Domingo, which gave birth to the first black republic in the world. The island of Santo Domingo became the Republic of Haiti. One should emphasize that immediately after Haitian independence, hospitality and Haitian nationality were granted to all blacks around the world who were fleeing the slave order and arrived on Haitian territory.

Thirdly, once independent, the generals of that era, including Alexandre Pétion, helped several fraternal Latin American countries in their liberation struggles by providing weapons, ammunition and soldiers. In recognition of that support, some countries integrated the colour red, which is one of the two colours of the Haitian flag, into their national flags. We would also like to recall that the flag of one Latin America country was actually sewn in Haiti, and Simón Bolivar made several trips to Haiti.

Fourthly, during the Second World War, we granted hospitality to many peoples who were persecuted in their own homelands and elsewhere, including Jewish people.

Fifthly, in the 1960s Haiti played a major role in the decolonization of the Africa continent. Thus, among the other efforts undertaken, it is important to recall that many Haitian professors were sent to Africa.

The list is a long one.

In recalling those few historical facts, we do not want to talk about past behaviour; rather, we want to recall that Haiti has always moved forward with history and always played the role that history assigned to it. Here we would like to show that solidarity is not simply connected to the wealth of a State. It is first and foremost a matter of the heart, of generosity, of humanity.

All that is to say that we attach great importance to the monitoring of the commemoration of the bicentenary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade. The choice of theme, "Victory over slavery: Haiti and beyond," to commemorate 2014 is for us a source of pride, satisfaction and recognition of Haiti's historic role in the fight to end slavery. We welcome the choice.

At the opening of the international conference held in 2009 on the Haitian Revolution and the universality of human rights, the then UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences, Mr. Pierre Sané, presented Haiti as the cradle of human rights. He said, "The universality of human rights was conceived in Paris in 1789, but the birth occurred in Haiti a few years later".

In conclusion, may the construction of the Permanent Memorial lead to greater respect for the rights of all peoples in the world, regardless of their place of origin or what they have suffered.

Mr. Reyes Rodríguez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We Cubans are proud of our African roots. The identity of the Cuban nation was the result of a process of acculturation that occurred with inputs from various ethnic groups in difficult environments, first colonial, then neocolonial. From 1959 onwards, a phase of true integration began, where all the components of the Cuban nation were given equal value. We are essentially a blend of our Hispanic and African heritage. We have also been influenced by Asia and the Native American peoples.

In Cuba as in several other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, we can clearly see the consequences of the transatlantic slave trade. The colonial plantations of the island saw the arrival, as part of that cruel trade, of about 1,300,000 Africans. Those men, women and children were snatched by force from their African villages and families and sold as slave labour on the other side of the Atlantic.

With the passage of the centuries, Cuban culture and nationality arose, also nourished by our African heritage. Cubans are grateful to their African ancestors for, among many other things, their wisdom, joy, creativity and adaptability to adverse environments, the richness of their history and religious beliefs,

the rhythm of their music, their energy in spirit and, essentially, their spirit of rebellion against injustice and their dauntless courage in the struggle for independence and freedom.

Freed slaves and their descendants were the main actors in the various phases of the wars that made it possible for the Cuban people to exercise their self-determination. As the commander-in-chief of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro, said in his statement at the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in Durban in 2001:

> "The inhuman exploitation to which the peoples of the three continents, including Asia, were subjected affected the destiny and the daily lives of over 4.5 billion people living in third world countries, whose poverty rates, unemployment, illiteracy, diseases, infant mortality, life expectancy, and other innumerable calamities are impossible to enumerate briefly, are shocking and horrific. They are the contemporary victims of that atrocity, which lasted for centuries, and clearly deserve compensation for the horrendous crimes committed against their ancestors and peoples."

Developed countries and their consumer societies, which are responsible for the accelerated and nearly unstoppable destruction of the environment, have been the main beneficiaries of conquest and colonization, transatlantic slavery and human trafficking and the ruthless exploitation and extermination of hundreds of millions of children of the South. They have also been enriched through the unjust economic order oppressing humankind and the international financial institutions created exclusively by them and for them. That rich and wasteful world possesses the technical and financial resources to pay its debt to humankind.

Cuba supports the just compensation request put forward by the States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). Cuba also demands the special and differentiated treatment that developing countries merit and need, particularly the African countries, in terms of international economic relationships. Cuba rejects the shameful and selfish opulence of the few that is guiding the ongoing globalization.

Cuba supports and co-sponsors the draft resolution that is presented, each year, by the States members of CARICOM and the African Group. Cuba recognizes the importance of strengthening the activities of the United Nations and other international organizations, especially UNESCO, in the matter. It is the minimum that the international community can do to repair the crime committed against humanity in the form of the transatlantic trade that forced Africans into slavery.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on agenda item 120.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/68/L.7, entitled "Permanent memorial to and remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution, in addition to those delegations listed in document A/68/L.7, the following countries have become sponsors of the draft resolution: Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, China, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Equatorial Guinea, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ireland, Japan, Latvia, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Norway, Paraguay, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, Samoa, San Marino, Serbia, the Republic of Seychelles, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Ukraine.

The President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/68/L.7?

Draft resolution A/68/L.7 was adopted (resolution 68/7).

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

Mrs. Almeida Watanabe Patriota (Brazil): Brazil can not overstress its thanks to Member States, the United Nations and civil society for their tireless efforts in organizing and successfully accomplishing the international competition to build the Permanent Memorial on United Nations premises in honour of the victims of the transatlantic slave trade. That trade was one of the worst tragedies, as it was the largest

and longest-lasting crime ever committed against humankind.

Brazil commends the joint efforts of Member States, in particular the Permanent Mission of Jamaica, for its leadership of the Permanent Memorial Committee, in which Brazil proudly participates. Brazil is convinced that the hour has come for the proclamation by the United Nations of the international decade for people of African descent.

As stressed by the representative of Jamaica, the establishment of the Permanent Memorial is a milestone; however, it is but a first step along the long and necessary path to achieve the broad education of the public in order to raise awareness against prejudice, intolerance and racism. Brazil will endeavour to make every necessary effort and work with Member States and partners towards the adoption of a draft resolution on the international decade for people of African descent, as mandated in paragraph 79 of resolution 67/155.

In conclusion, Brazil would request the decisive support of Member States and the President of the General Assembly to that end.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 120.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.